



A REVIEW OF NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS OPPOSING BUSH TAX CUT PROPOSAL

PREPARED BY: DEMOCRATIC STAFF, SENATE BUDGET COMMITTEE

April 2, 2003

American Newspapers Speak Out Against President Bush's Massive Tax Cuts

A review of newspaper editorials from around the country indicates strong resistance and opposition to the Bush administration's massive tax cut plan.

The ongoing consideration of a budget resolution has prompted a new round of editorials with an overwhelming majority of newspapers rejecting the House position of a \$726 billion reconciled tax cut. With limited exception, most newspapers are either urging the conferees to adopt the Senate position of a \$350 billion reconciled tax cut, or argue for a smaller tax cut or even no tax cut at all at this time.

The editorials cite a variety of reasons for opposing the President's large tax cut proposal, but the most common themes are the return of deep and sustained budget deficits, the costs associated with the looming retirement of the baby boom generation and the uncertainty of war costs.

Excerpted editorials, including those that commented earlier in the year on the President's budget and tax proposals, appear below. A total of 71 editorials from 34 states and the District of Columbia are included in this report. This is not intended to be an all inclusive list as these editorials represent only those that have come to the attention of the Committee.

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles Times: "A Bad Time for Tax Cuts" March 28, 2003

"There is nothing wrong with tax cuts that give the struggling a break, reward and encourage savings and investment or boost a sagging economy. But really lavish tax cuts -- especially during the costly uncertainties of wartime -- can be defended only with the discredited voodoo of supply-side economics.

"If taxes are deeply cut, the theory goes, wealthy people invest their windfall, businesses thrive and jobs are created. Then, new tax revenue generated by this prosperity, even at lower rates, more than makes up for the original tax reductions and can even pull the federal government out of its deficit. Unfortunately this is poppycock, as the federal deficits that piled up during Ronald Reagan's presidency attest...

"The best course right now, however, is no course. Simply delay any decision until the growing debts of war are known. Make a decision on the basis of knowledge, not wishes."

The Daily News of Los Angeles: "Budgeting for war; Operation Iraqi Freedom calls into question the wisdom of major tax cuts" March 26, 2003

"Of course, that projected deficit could be scaled back by reducing the president's planned tax cuts, which are expected to cost \$726 billion over 10 years.

"It's a tough sacrifice, as most Americans would no doubt like to see their annual tribute to the IRS reduced. But it's only logical that if, because of war, the cost of government dramatically goes up, then the revenues of government must not at the same time dramatically go down...

"A compromise is in order, and one seems to be afoot in Congress, specifically in the Senate, which on Tuesday approved \$350 billion in tax cuts - less than half as much as the president wants, but a lot more than no tax cuts at all, which many Democrats have urged.

"Both parties would be wise to sign on to this kind of compromise."

San Jose Mercury News: "Senate hands Bush an intelligent setback" March 26, 2003

"In debating the budget further, lawmakers ought to have all the numbers on the table.

"The war surely will cost more than \$75 billion. Rebuilding Iraq will cost far more than the \$1.7 billion the president allowed in his supplemental budget request Tuesday. Securing the homeland, a prescription drug plan, reforming Medicare and Social Security, as the president wants to do, will all cost money.

"The White House effort to undermine a meaningful budget debate hardly encourages the unity Bush's lieutenants are demanding of Congress in the name of war."

Ventura County Star: "Clever timing on war costs" March 26, 2003

"Perhaps because they finally got a look at the bill for the war, the senators unexpectedly voted Tuesday, reversing their earlier vote, and cut the president's planned tax cut by more than half, to \$350 billion over 10 years. One hopes this vote reflects a new seriousness about the problem of deficit spending.

Right now, there is no other plan to pay for the war other than the government going ever deeper in debt."

San Francisco Chronicle: "War and taxes" March 24, 2003

"The uncertain cost of war is another compelling reason for Congress to reject President Bush's latest tax cut proposals, which would cost the U.S. Treasury at least \$726 billion during the next decade."

Sacramento Bee: "Paying for tax cuts / GOP budget writers target poor and elderly" March 23, 2003

"If you've been wondering who would pay for the big new tax cuts for the rich that President Bush is pushing, wonder no more. The Republican budget writers in Congress have started to supply the answers: Poor children, veterans, the elderly and any middle-age person counting on Social Security and Medicare when he or she retires will pick up this bill.

"Budget writers in both the House and Senate budget committees went along with most of the \$1.6 trillion in tax cuts the White House wants. But they recognized you can't have something for nothing without creating enormous and permanent budget deficits.

"So under the leadership of Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., the Senate committee solved the problem with a plan that calls for the budget to return to balance in 2013 through spending cuts that won't be enacted until this year's sixth-graders are old enough to vote. Talk about your basic profile in courage.

"The House committee, under Rep. Jim Nussle, R-Iowa, was more forthright. It instructed legislators to cut nondefense discretionary spending - the portion of the budget that goes for education, science, transportation, parks and the like - over the next decade by \$200 billion. And then it ordered \$450 billion in cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, veterans benefits, food stamps and children's health insurance. The Medicare cuts were too much even for House Republicans, and Nussle removed them

to win approval of his plan on the House floor last Friday.”

COLORADO

Fort Collins Coloradoan: “War places new demands on federal budget” March 28, 2003

“The U.S. Senate did the country a favor this week by not going along with President Bush's plan to cut taxes by \$726 billion over 10 years and run up the national debt.

“Given that the president has asked for \$75 billion to pay for the war in Iraq through September, now is not the time to reduce the federal government's income on the theory that cutting taxes would boost the economy to such an extent that revenues will increase.

“Cutting taxes and kicking up military spending at the same time just doesn't make sense. Such a move would only add to the government's deficit spending and affect the economy for decades to come.”

Denver Post: “First step toward sanity” March 27, 2003

“... The (Denver) Post has no objection to borrowing the money to finance this war. The urgent need to keep supplies flowing to our troops and the unknowable cost of the war effort leave no alternative...

“In short, we accept the president's proposal to finance this war on MasterCard. What bothers us is the lack of any long-term plan to eventually pay off the MasterCard - and we don't mean by transferring the balance to Visa.

“This year's federal deficit already seems headed for \$400 billion (gulp). Total federal debt accumulated over the life of the republic is about \$6.5 trillion. Set against such numbers, the notion of piling tax cut on top of tax cut as far as the eye can see is ludicrous.”

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington Post: “Lay Off the Tax Candy” March 31, 2003

“So what's about to happen in negotiations with the House? The early word is a split-the-difference "compromise" at \$550 billion...A half-trillion-dollar tax cut should be turned down -- and now. The country's fiscal health demands it.”

FLORIDA

South Florida Sun-Sentinel: "Senate Must Stick To Guns" March 30, 2003

"The United States Senate has interjected some sanity into the economic debate raging in Washington by slashing President Bush's proposed \$726 billion, 10-year tax cut plan in half.

"That's encouraging, though at this point half measures aren't enough. With the cost of the Iraqi war and the occupation unknown, and with the nation already facing a \$300 billion deficit next year, now is not the time to be talking about tax cuts. Indeed, the president and Congress should be concentrating on putting the nation's fiscal house in order by narrowing the budget deficit, not widening it.

"The full Senate must stick to its guns, and refuse to budge if House-Senate negotiators seek to undermine its principled stand."

Miami Herald: "Senate putting brakes on proposed tax cuts" March 28, 2003

"This week, President Bush asked Congress for \$75 billion to cover war costs and related anti-terrorist efforts for the next six months. Whatever reservations there may be about the war, our troops are fighting, and we must pay the expenses. Congress should approve this spending. But over the next decade, Iraq and increased national-security costs easily could amount to hundreds of billions, depending on the war's length and the reconstruction needed in its aftermath.

"Add to this the fiscal crises that threaten Medicare, Medicaid, social services and a brewing crisis in Social Security financing. Can the United States afford any tax cut? Should the old, sick and poor bear all of the costs of this war? Even the \$350 billion cap on tax cuts approved by the Senate seems frivolous. It was, nonetheless, a worthy push against a wartime president's wrongheaded budget priorities."

St. Petersburg Times: "Unconscionable cuts" March 27, 2003

"The struggle for a responsible budget continues as three moderate Republican senators join the Democratic chorus against President Bush's proposed tax cuts...

"While the senators deserve praise for their disciplined stand in the face of political coercion, the struggle for a responsible budget is far from over. More parliamentary tricks are ahead, and the Senate will have to work out its differences with the House, which gave Bush every penny in tax cuts he asked for. The House's version of discipline was to cut the budgets of services that help, among others, veterans and low-income elderly and children.

"A substantial tax cut is certain to be part of a final budget. In a time of uncertainty, the

easiest choice is to borrow against the future. But it is wrong.”

Palm Beach Post: “No economic security in the President’s budget” March 26, 2003

“The tax cuts were supposed to head off recession, but even proponents have muted that claim. Spread over 10 years and designed to foster long-term investment - if they do anything more than swell millionaires' bank accounts - the cuts are not aimed where they can light a fire under the economy.

“The Senate, 51-48, reduced the tax cut by half Tuesday, but Mr. Bush and his blindly ideological allies will fight to reverse that vote in conference with the House and keep the country on a track to where it won't be able to afford veterans' benefits tomorrow.”

Orlando Sentinel: “Passing new tax cuts would be fiscally irresponsible for Congress”
March 9, 2003

“President George W. Bush is still pushing his 10-year, \$674 billion tax cut as if there's money to burn in Washington...

“As Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan recently noted, Washington can't get out of this hole with tax cuts. It will take reforms in Social Security and Medicare and tough choices on the budget. Congress can start by turning the president down on his latest tax-cut proposal.”

Herald Tribune (Sarasota): “Inspect Bush’s tax package” January 19, 2003

“A well-examined tax reform plan that changed the treatment of dividends but excluded marginal-rate reductions in the upper brackets would have been responsible and palatable when Bush took office and deficits were in check. But that window of opportunity has been slammed shut, and the Congress has an obligation to place the president's proposals in the context of a dramatically different time.”

GEORGIA

Atlanta Journal and Constitution: “Push for wartime tax cut selfish and shortsighted” March 26, 2003

“We have more than 200,000 troops in a foreign country today risking their lives for this country...Tens of thousands are members of the National Guard, many of whom are making significant financial sacrifice in order to do their duty.

“Meanwhile, back here in the safety of home, we are too cheap to pay the bill for them.

For the first time in our history, we are refusing to accept the financial sacrifice of war, and instead are actually cutting government revenue. We are shifting the cost to our children and grandchildren, who will have to repay all this money we are borrowing at the same time they're trying to cover our Social Security and medical costs.

"Even under normal circumstances, the selfishness we are showing by demanding wartime tax cuts that we refuse to offset with reduced federal spending would be cause for shame. The comparison with the selflessness of our troops overseas only compounds that shame."

HAWAII

Honolulu Advertiser: "This is a terrible time for Bush's tax cut bill" March 26, 2003

"Senate Democrats are being credited with a major coup for cutting in half President Bush's proposed \$726 billion tax-cut package.

"On the contrary, they need to be chided for failing to cut the other half.

"Bush's first round of tax cuts, totalling \$1.6 trillion, was a bad idea to begin with - even before an expensive war in Iraq. That's because these tax cuts have already succeeded in destroying one of the nation's most remarkable achievements of the 1990s - a budget surplus."

ILLINOIS

Chicago Tribune: "Cooling on tax cuts" March 29, 2003

"George Washington is said to have compared the U.S. House to a boiling-hot pot of tea from which legislation flows into the cooling saucer of the Senate. Such was the effect of the Senate last week when it cooled, for a time, at least, a particular passion of President Bush: tax cuts.

"As it boiled over from the House, the Bush plan would cut taxes by \$726 billion over the next 10 years. The Senate cut that by more than half to \$350 billion. Republican leaders hope to restore Bush's entire tax cut package when both houses of Congress start reconciling their differences in a conference committee next week.

"Let's hope not. The White House has chosen to ignore the long-term impact of its tax and spending plans. It will be up to Congress to inject some reality in the deliberations."

Journal Star (Peoria): "Budget can't afford any of Bush's tax cut" March 19, 2003

"President Bush wants \$1.57 trillion in new tax cuts over the next decade, with his economic stimulus accounting for \$726 billion of that. He says the cuts would stimulate and grow the economy, an argument that deserves a skeptical audience for several reasons. First, nothing can stimulate and grow the economy as long as we are paying for a war. Second, the cuts he proposes would take place too gradually to have a stimulative effect. Third, the bigger the national debt, the greater the odds it will neutralize any stimulation. Fourth, the nation can't afford what the president wants.

"To be sure, \$350 billion is better than \$1.57 trillion. But we'd still have to borrow the money to cut the taxes, while we're borrowing the money to wage the war, while we're borrowing the money from baby boomers getting ready to retire. And as stimulants go in a \$10 trillion economy, \$35 billion a year is the equivalent of a cup of decaf...

"But \$350 billion in tax cuts the nation can ill afford is only proportionately better than what the president seeks. All or none is the proper argument here. The president himself should face reality and opt for none."

INDIANA

The Indianapolis Star: "Paying the price of war with Iraq" March 30, 2003

"Reducing the tax cut is also the right thing to do, if only temporarily. The United States is facing a \$300 billion deficit, and the war will be costly. The total price tag of the conflict, foreign aid payments, and occupying and rebuilding Iraq until a stable government can be installed will far exceed the \$500 billion price tag of the first Gulf War.

"Other war-related needs are also likely to emerge. The U.S. airlines industry, which has struggled since the war began, has asked for another government bailout.

"U.S. military planners anticipate a short war, but as Sen. Richard G. Lugar has cautioned, Americans must be prepared to play a key role in Iraq's reconstruction for years to come. Until it's clear exactly how much our role will cost us, reducing the tax cuts is a prudent and cautionary pre-emptive action."

IOWA

Des Moines Register: "Any tax cut is too much" March 28, 2003

"In the middle of a costly war with Iraq, while Medicare and Medicaid are in fiscal trouble, while federal mandates on everything from domestic security to education go unfunded, and the national debt continues to grow, lawmakers continue to debate tax

cuts.

“Worse, they're not debating whether to cut. But how much should be cut.

“Rather than supporting the \$726 billion cut President Bush proposed, the Senate has voted to chop \$350 billion. And Senate Democrats perceive this as a victory.

“It's not a victory. It's the equivalent of chopping an arm off at the elbow instead of the shoulder. And then cheering about it.

“\$350 billion is \$350 billion too much. Any tax cut right now is too much.”

KENTUCKY

The Courier-Journal: “Debt in the trillions” March 11, 2003

“The Bush administration, which pushed through \$1.3 trillion in tax cuts in 2001, now is peddling the notion of cutting revenues further through an additional \$1.5 trillion tax cut.

“Such slavish devotion to taxcutting doctrine under any and all circumstances is reckless in the extreme...

“Republicans, once upon a time, expended a lot of energy proclaiming that the federal government needed to live within its means, just like a family. Well, any family that ran its affairs the way President Bush handles the federal budget would be saying goodbye to the suburbs and hoping it isn't headed for Skid Row.”

MAINE

Bangor Daily News: “Setting the Budget” March 28, 2003

“The Senate passed a budget resolution Wednesday that properly lowered the amount set aside for tax cuts, but the debate over the course of federal spending for the next decade isn't nearly over. With a House resolution containing both the president's massive tax cut and cuts in social programs to pay for it, the Senate must exert itself to ensure a more sensible plan prevails.”

Portland Press Herald: “Small tax cut good, none would be better” March 26, 2003

“It still has too much red ink and, therefore, is a threat to the national economy, but Maine's senior senator did well on Tuesday to help bring a federal budget blueprint more in line with reality...

"Given war in Iraq, the need for better homeland defense, a fiscal crisis among the states and plans for a prescription drug benefit under Medicare, tax cuts should be the last thing on Washington's agenda. This is especially so when they're to be funded largely by borrowing against our children's future."

MARYLAND

Baltimore Sun: "Caution caucus strikes back" March 27, 2003

"As negotiations over the reduced tax cut begin, the senators' message to the House should be: Take it or leave it.

"Even at the Senate total of \$350 billion over 10 years, the tax cut is still far too large. The nation is awash in red ink, piling up enormous bills for the war in Iraq and facing a long-term cash crunch in Medicare and Social Security."

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston Globe: "Confronting war's costs" March 25, 2003

"With the United States committed to war, requiring soldiers to face the hard truths of battle each day in Iraq, the nation's leaders must face hard truths in Washington.

"Specifically, war costs and tax cuts do not mix. To enact a second deep tax cut when war costs - already 11 figures - are rising toward an unknown total would be to insult people's intelligence and threaten the nation's future...

"Congress and the president will have support for virtually any resources the war requires. But they will not have support - and will not deserve it - if they fudge the costs and try to pass them on to their children."

MICHIGAN

Detroit Free Press: "Congress should prudently put off plans for tax cut" March 21, 2003

"What will it take to get Congress off the tax-cut track?

"Both the House and Senate actually have stood up to President Bush's proposal and shaved at it by about an eighth, to \$1.4 trillion over 10 years. But every bit of fiscal news argues for dropping the budget-busting plan flat...

"Congress still has a long way to go on the '04 budget. But the resolutions it OK's now will set the parameters, and be difficult to change. Tax cuts can wait until after realistic

budgets are set on everything from war to how much food is on poor children's plates."

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis Star Tribune: "Fiscal folly; This is no time for tax cuts" March 29, 2003

"With deficits mushrooming, with an apparently lengthy, and unfunded, war raging, with domestic programs getting cut to the bone -- including veterans' benefits that would "support our troops" -- this is no time to pass any tax cut. It is especially no time for one that is heavily tilted toward the wealthiest Americans -- and one that is touted as an economic stimulus but has been broadly panned by economic experts as anything but.

"Senators should be fighting hard to eliminate the entire 2003 Bush tax cut; the one in 2001 was massive. It's time for Congress to show some real fiscal responsibility and tell the financial ideologues in the White House they've had enough."

MISSISSIPPI

Clarion-Ledger (Jackson): "Sacrifice" March 26, 2003

"The Bush budget and his plan for a 10-year \$726 billion tax cut was questionable in the first place because of its impact on the national deficit. Such a plan now in the face of war costs is even more far-fetched.

"The Senate understands this and voted Tuesday to slash the tax cut plan in half. The House should continue that fiscally conservative course.

"Congress must approve the war spending for the sake of the military effort and homeland safety. The Bush administration should abandon its pie-in-the-sky tax cut plan."

MISSOURI

St. Louis Post-Dispatch: "Guns and butter" March 26, 2003

"President George W. Bush also believes that we can have both guns and butter -- fight an expensive war while buttering the affluent with massive tax cuts. We can't. To attempt it will burden our children with a gargantuan federal debt, while stalling economic growth in years to come...

"A fat tax cut now -- on top of those passed two years ago -- would be economic overkill. It would run up a gargantuan federal debt for future taxpayers to pay, with

interest. Worse, it would hasten the day when interest rates begin rising, pushing up the price of mortgages, car loans and other debt. That would mean slower growth and fewer jobs...

"What's worse, dreams of ever balancing the budget would evaporate, and annual deficits would stretch to infinity."

Kansas City Star: "Unfair tax proposal rewards wrong group" January 9, 2003

"There's no real debate over the fact that Bush's proposal on dividends would largely benefit the rich. Some apologists talk about wanting to help the elderly, which doesn't tell the whole story; Bush's dividend proposal would help elderly people *with lots of money in the stock market*.

"Bush's tax package is unfair, short-sighted and fiscally irresponsible. He and members of Congress – particularly Republicans, who now control Capitol Hill – must develop a far better plan in the months ahead."

NEBRASKA

Omaha World Herald: "Fiscal winds of war" March 27, 2003

"...the U.S. Senate, in its surprise vote on Tuesday, got it right: \$ 726 billion was simply too much in the face of an open-ended and obviously costly war with Iraq."

NEW JERSEY

The Record (Bergen County): "Bush's tax cuts: Is busting the budget a mark of patriotism?" March 26, 2003

"Yesterday, the Senate reversed its earlier course and voted to halve the tax cuts, approving \$350 billion in reductions by a vote of 51 to 48. That's still too much. But at least, some lawmakers are beginning to stand up to the president and his harebrained financial scheme.

"They are beginning to realize that the nation cannot afford war and reconstruction in Iraq as well as unprecedented tax cuts that benefit the wealthiest Americans...

"Does this nation have \$726 billion to spare? Hardly. The federal deficit is already ballooning to more than \$300 billion. Add in the as-yet-unknown cost of the war and its aftermath in Iraq as well as the cost of homeland security and the war on terror. Then consider the coming crunch in Medicare and Social Security as the baby boom generation retires...

"Mr. Bush may win some portion of his tax cuts, depending on the budget reconciliation between the Senate and House, his popularity, and on clearer estimates of the cost of the war. But common sense would dictate that the nation should not spend far more than it has, especially in time of war. This is certainly not the time to spend as if there's no tomorrow."

NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque Tribune: "Timing on war budget reeks of subterfuge" March 27, 2003

"For months, Congress has been pressing the White House to estimate how much the war might cost so they could make some provision for it in this year's budget or next year's. The White House resisted, insisting it didn't know.

"Last week, the House passed its budget resolution containing the president's \$726 billion tax cut, and Monday the Senate committed itself to a tax cut almost as large. Suddenly, the White House knew exactly how much it needed to prosecute the war for the next six months, \$74.7 billion, and briefed lawmakers on it late in the day...

"Perhaps because they finally got a look at the bill for the war, the senators unexpectedly voted Tuesday, reversing their earlier vote, and cut the president's planned tax cut by more than half, to \$350 billion over 10 years. One hopes this vote reflects a new seriousness about the problem of deficit spending."

The New Mexican (Santa Fe): "GOP solons retreat along tax-cut front" January 27, 2003

"The White House, having hemmed and hawed over the costs of the Iraqi war, finally leveled with Congress this week: As near as we can figure, top aides mumbled, it's going to cost \$75 billion.

"This foray into honesty served to awaken the fiscal responsibility in a long-lulled Republican Congress, whose members half a year ago handed President Bush all the war powers he needed to launch the invasion, and who more recently have been reticent about budgeting for battle. Nor were they willing to face a domestic financial fact: Our nation is in recession; revenues are down.

"So how, in good conscience, can they carry out the president's dreams of a trillion-dollar tax cut during the decade to come? They can't."

NEW YORK

Newsday: "How the Hell Are We Going to Pay For This?; As War Bills Come Due, It's No

Time to Slash Taxes March 30, 2003

“So who will pay? With the debt Bush is racking up, it's our children who will pay - and pay dearly. Call it the debt tax.

“And as the cost of war and homeland security squeeze out other spending, it's the poor who will bear the brunt of attempts to economize.

“The recent House budget resolution calls for steep cuts in veterans programs, student loans, child care, food stamps and aid to the elderly and disabled. But with an annual deficit that is more than the government spends on all of its discretionary domestic programs combined, there is no way that spending cuts alone can pull the nation out of this hole.

“It certainly won't be the millionaires among us who pay. According to one analysis from the Brookings Institution, the Bush tax cuts will put \$90,000 a year into the pockets of people with \$1- million-plus incomes. By any reckoning, the wealthy will make out just fine.

“So there you have it. The Republican plan, in a nutshell, is to comfort the comfortable, afflict the afflicted and hand the bill to our kids.”

Buffalo News: “New York's budget hit; Federal spending plan could add billions to a suffering state's burden” March 29, 2003

“House Republicans supporting a federal budget that includes massive tax cuts and reduced aid did New Yorkers no favors this month. Even if one accepts that the spending plan's tax cuts will spur the economy, they also will subtract billions from state revenues at the same time the budget itself could increase state costs in health care. And make no mistake, those costs will cascade down to the local level...

“The overall GOP gamble is that tax cuts will increase government income in the long run by stimulating the economy and restoring prosperity. That will, theoretically, create more taxable wealth...

“The last GOP tax cut was supposed to spur the economy. It didn't. The state's GOP representatives in Congress are taking a huge risk by voting for cuts in state aid based on an assumption that this time, things will be different.”

The New York Times: “Selective Sacrifice on the Home Front” March 27, 2003

“With a costly war raging and the government's deficit deepening by the day, Republican Congressional leaders are rushing to an insiders-only closed conference that threatens to be a landmark in down-and-dirty budget politicking. Tax cuts for the affluent paid for by program cuts for the needy will be on the table. The leaders' main

goal is to reverse the embarrassing Senate blow dealt to the president and salvage his full \$726 billion deficit-feeding plan for more tax cuts for upper-bracket Americans. While the House followed President Bush in lock step, Senate Democrats and moderate Republicans rebelled at such wartime excess and cut it in half.

"The conference, run tight as a poker game by a few G.O.P. leaders and White House budgeteers, will dictate a resolution of the differences. We urge the Republican moderates who have been arguing for fiscal sanity to pound on the conference door, if necessary, in defending their stand. They must make it clear to their leaders that they will not vote for any bill that includes such crippling tax cuts in a time of war."

The Times Union (Albany): "The cost of war; The Bush administration's estimate is a limited and optimistic one" March 26, 2003

"The prospect of cutting taxes while the nation is running up war costs is a formula for a return to the huge deficits of the Reagan era. Yet even this prospect did not prevent the House from giving Mr. Bush his full \$726 billion tax cut when it approved a \$2.2 trillion budget last week. The Senate version, while more restrained, is still far too indulgent.

"The battle isn't over, however, as the White House hopes to persuade the Senate to reverse its vote or, at the least, to increase the size of the tax cut in talks with House negotiators. But the only responsible course remains the one articulated by Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz.: Don't cut taxes at all until the real costs of the war are known."

The Post-Standard (Syracuse): "Fighting the war on credit" March 26, 2003

"Senators who changed their minds cited the cost of the war. Their concern is reasonable, as no one can predict how high that cost will rise. The \$74.7 billion request is only the first installment in what appears, at this juncture, to be an open-ended expense.

"More than a little irony may be found in the way the sides are lining up over the tax-cut plan. It is supported by conservatives, although it appears to be a contradiction of traditional conservative philosophy, which abhors borrowing to meet current expenses.

"To be sure, the nation historically has run deficits in time of war. But the government also has asked the people to sacrifice. Advocates of the big tax cut want to postpone that sacrifice until they are safely out of office and beyond accountability."

Poughkeepsie Journal: "Delay tax cut until war costs are known" March 20, 2003

"No one knows for sure how much the war with Iraq will cost the United States -- nor

the amount that will be needed to bolster homeland security during the conflict.

“Therefore, it's an inappropriate time to go forward with a massive federal tax cut that will have long-term consequences.

That doesn't mean President Bush should scrap the idea. But Congress should delay any votes on the matter until the war costs are known.”

NORTH CAROLINA

The News & Observer (Raleigh): “Paying for war” March 26, 2003

“By voting yesterday to slash the tax cuts in half -- a prudent move, even if it doesn't go far enough -- the Senate has forced the budget into a conference committee. Now the loyal opposition in Congress ought to draw its own line in the sand. Saying no to tax cuts during wartime wouldn't be unpatriotic. A realistic budget, assessing the government's costs and raising sufficient revenue, would be a service to the troops and the vast majority of Americans for whom they are fighting.”

The Herald-Sun (Durham): “Feed the deficit now, pay the bill later” March 26, 2003

“Federal social services programs are already reeling from current and expected funding cuts by the administration, imperiling the safety net in cash-starved states like North Carolina. Running up huge deficits will only lead to a lot of unnecessary economic pain, and for that reason as well as others, the \$ 350 billion in tax cuts endorsed by the Senate is quite enough at the moment. Everything else the president wants should be put on the legislative shelf until we can see our way out of the Persian Gulf.”

Wilmington Star: “Greenspan's math isn't fuzzy” February 14, 2003

“The Oracle of Greenspan says President Bush's latest economic proposals would do little to help the economy now, but would plunge the nation into dangerous debt just as the huge generation born after World War II starts to retire...

“After years of deepening deficits produced by the economic fantasies of Ronald Reagan, Republicans and Democrats alike – including President Bush I and President Clinton – were forced to conclude that the best way to promote economic growth and protect the retirement benefits of coming generations was to pay down the deficit.

“Against all the gloomy predictions, we managed to do that during the Clinton years. Deficits turned into surpluses. Mr. Bush and a compliant Congress took care of that right away.

"Now the president wants to dig us even deeper into debt, pretending to believe that national bankruptcy is the prescription for prosperity.

"The Oracle isn't buying it. Neither should Congress."

Asheville Citizen-Times: "Irresponsible doesn't begin to describe flaws in Bush's budget"
February 7, 2003

"The (Bush) budget proposal is a record \$2.23 trillion. It contains a) record budget deficits b) tax proposals that are being presented in a disingenuous manner and are irresponsible to the point of recklessness, and c) contains no money for what appears to be an inevitable war in Iraq.

"Irresponsible doesn't begin to describe the flaws in this budget."

News & Record (Greensboro): "Bush economic plan ignores job creation" January 12, 2003

"...his massive tax-cutting plan translates into lingering federal budget deficits, a poor choice as war looms in Iraq and homeland security costs mount. Shorter-term goals that create jobs for displaced workers are preferable to revamping the nation's tax structure. The administration's approach will be too costly, too ambitious and too late."

OHIO

Columbus Dispatch: "A \$350 billion victory" March 28, 2003

"The president's additional tax cut is fiscally reckless at a time when the nation already is beset by danger and uncertainty. The world is in the grip of profound changes, including violent confrontations whose outcomes are unpredictable. This is the worst time to be unsettling things further with economic policies that don't add up...

"The Senate shouldn't give an inch. In fact, it should roll the tax cut back even further if it can."

Cleveland Plain Dealer: "Facing fiscal facts; Senate's backtracking on the size of Bush's tax cut reflects a laudable prudence in the face of a costly war" March 28, 2003

"Having been stonewalled in its preliminary budget legislation by a White House that refused to estimate the cost of the Iraqi war until hours after that first measure was passed, the Senate was sobered - and more than a bit insulted - by President George W. Bush's immediate request for another nearly \$75 billion as a down payment.

"The timing was bad, the portent worse: A big tax cut now, in the face of record deficits

and an expensive Iraqi adventure, would be unforgivably irresponsible. For once, the Senate did the right thing: It reconsidered the \$626 billion, 10-year tax cut it had so recently authorized, and halved it.”

The Cincinnati Post: “More harm than good” January 9, 2003

“The president can’t have it both ways. He can’t simultaneously fight one and maybe two wars, build up homeland security, provide a prescription drug benefit, shore up Medicare and put Social Security on a sound financial footing and at the same time enact a \$670 billion tax cut (over 10 years) without taking on debilitating deficits.

“Even the most fervent supply sider would be hard-pressed to argue that these cuts would generate enough increased consumer and business spending (and hence tax revenues) to keep deficits at a manageable level, given the looming demands of the aging Baby Boom generation for health and retirement security benefits and what appears to be an unrelenting demand for high defense spending.”

Dayton Daily News: “Bush Tax Cut Definitely Not Good For All” January 9, 2003

“If the president and Congress can end the tax on dividends even when war clouds are looming and the unbudgeted costs associated with gearing up for an attack should be tempering them, imagine the conditions it would take to bring the tax back.

“Unquestionably, the Bush White House believes fostering the interests of corporations and the well-off is good for the country. The stimulus plan is just one more example of that mind-set.

“But Mr. Bush can’t take credit for so aggressively fostering that agenda and also say he’s practicing compassionate conservatism. It’s just not so.”

OKLAHOMA

Tulsa World: “War and taxes” March 24, 2003

“Making huge tax cuts at the same time we are incurring a huge war debt seems foolhardy. Even those who believe that tax cuts stimulate the economy to the point that economic growth offsets lost revenue have to understand that the benefits are not immediate.

“It is important, of course, that Congress support the president in time of war. But that doesn’t mean blindly going along with a risky economic plan.”

OREGON

The Oregonian: "Paying for war" March 29, 2003

"In the military offensive to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and oust Saddam Hussein, there mustn't be any scrimping on resources. But it's incomprehensible to think that the nation can meet the needs to be successful in this war while continuing with the president's proposed tax cuts.

"Reducing the tax cut to \$350 billion was a start in the right direction. Congress must come up with a realistic budget."

Statesman Journal (Salem): "Funding war should put tax cuts on hold" March 26, 2003

"So it's illogical for Congress to embrace tax cuts at the same time that it is dramatically increasing national spending. The Senate on Tuesday made a responsible decision by trimming the president's planned tax cuts in half."

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: "A wise vote to cut Bush's tax cut by half" March 27, 2003

"The U.S. Senate wisely voted Tuesday to reject over half of President Bush's proposed tax cut, thus reducing the likely budget deficit to some degree. This prudence is especially appropriate in the face of an administration request for an initial \$75 billion for what now appears to be a more-difficult-than-expected war in Iraq.

"Watching the administration and the two houses of Congress consider the elements in a budget is a little like watching a carnival shell game. The only outcome that is sure is that taxpayer money will be spent. Tuesday's Senate action was no exception, but at least under its terms there would be more revenue to pay for programs."

Philadelphia Inquirer: "Pushing irresponsible tax cuts is unpatriotic, given war's costs"
March 26, 2003

"Now that the shooting's started, President Bush has let the American people in on the financial cost of creating a free Iraq.

"Talk about overdue bills.

"Give the president nearly \$75 billion, and he says the next six months' expenses can be covered. That includes: supporting our troops, a smidgen of early reconstruction and humanitarian aid, and some limited aid to allies...

“With a number – a big, underestimated number – now attached to the cost of the Iraq conflict, the tax cuts make even less sense. To push ahead with them would be, well, unpatriotic.”

Intelligencer Journal (Lancaster): “Cutting the cut” March 26, 2003

“The United States Senate on Tuesday demonstrated uncommon responsibility by voting to cut President Bush's tax cut plan by more than half on Tuesday...”

“The Senate vote came on the same day the Congressional Budget Office forecast a \$1 trillion deficit over the next five years if the president's \$725 billion tax cut plan were approved. The CBO is a nonpartisan agency...”

“Taxpayers can stomach paying for the war in Iraq. Asking them to accept a \$1 trillion deficit for the next five years in these uncertain times goes too far.”

Morning Call (Allentown): “President Bush's economic plan: Nothing on the table for hungry states” January 9, 2003

“Most of the analysis focuses on President Bush's proposal to eliminate taxes on shareholders' dividend payments. Though it's only one aspect of his 10-year, \$674 billion plan, it is perhaps the boldest -- the boldest, though not necessarily the best, given the projected loss of hundreds of billions of dollars in tax revenue over 10 years. Ultimately, a ballooning federal deficit means the U.S. government will be less apt to bail out state budgets.”

RHODE ISLAND

Providence Journal-Bulletin: “War and taxes” March 24, 2003

“Even before war with Iraq, President Bush's proposed 10-year, \$726 billion tax cut looked like something that America could ill afford. Even more so now.”

“Mr. Bush is meeting some resistance from members of his own party in Congress, which could help scale back the tax cuts to more responsible levels. Unfortunately, it does not seem to be nearly enough.”

“Any tax cut – even the Democrats' \$350 billion version – seems irresponsible at a time of rapidly swelling budget deficits and uncertainty about a very expensive war. Huge tax cuts might be politically popular, but they will do little for the present economy and might wreak havoc on the future one.”

SOUTH CAROLINA

The Herald (Rock Hill): "Tax breaks for the wealthy" January 12, 2003

"All you have to do is tally the figures to see that Bush's plan primarily rewards upper-income Americans while doing little to actually stimulate the economy...Middle-class taxpayers, the consumers who so far have kept the economy afloat, receive only a pittance...

"What the nation needs is a stimulus package targeting middle-income taxpayers, job creation and federal aid for the states – not a tax break for the wealthiest Americans. If saying that constitutes class warfare, where do we enlist?"

TENNESSEE

Commercial Appeal (Memphis): "Bush tax cut could have high price" January 8, 2003

"The problem is compounded by the President's proposal to accelerate the 10-year, \$1.35 trillion tax cut Congress passed last year – another form of tax relief that provides lopsided benefits to a fortunate relative few. The plan carries the risk of large, long-term deficits that could ignite interest rates and consume capital that otherwise would be available for investment. At a time when the nation is likely to face higher costs for defense and homeland security, as well as health care and retirement, the affordability of the permanent tax cut remains open to doubt."

TEXAS

San Antonio Express-News: "This is not the time for massive tax cut" March 28, 2003

"This is hardly the time for a \$726 billion tax cut that benefits primarily the wealthiest among us.

"It's no time for a tax cut that is close to half that size either, which for now is the Senate's position, although a \$350 billion cut is certainly preferable to the one the White House is pushing.

"For the White House, tax cuts are the miracle cure for whatever ails the nation - in peacetime and war, in good times and bad.

"That is becoming more of a theological position than a responsible economic strategy. Not a company in the world, nor a family, would consider operating on such a budget - if, that is, it expects to stay solvent."

Austin American-Statesman: "Note to Congress: Wartime isn't tax-cut time" March 26, 2003

“Perhaps aware of how greedy it looked to be slashing taxes, primarily for our most affluent citizens, when Americans are fighting, getting wounded, captured and dying in war, the U.S. Senate decided Tuesday to give President Bush only half of his \$726 billion tax cut.

“Even half a loaf is too much...

“The war will cost a lot of money, and we have no business foisting the bills on our children and their children. If we think it's worth fighting, then we ought to pay for it -- and if that means no tax cut, so be it.”

Dallas Morning News: “Fiscal Sense; House should follow Senate’s lead on tax cuts”
March 26, 2003

“It isn't that Senate centrists hate tax cuts. It is that they recognize reality. And they decided yesterday to stand up for fiscal sense...

“The Iraqi war will cost well beyond the \$75 billion President Bush requested for the next six months. Saving Social Security and Medicare from bankruptcy will cost more than \$1 trillion. Those demands alone could explode the deficit well beyond its \$246 billion figure. By year's end, Americans could see a \$400 billion deficit.

“It is time to worry. It is time to act. It is time to amend.

“The Senate followed that strategy, and the House should, too. When the chambers meet to resolve their tax differences, House members should recognize the treasury has competing demands. And some, like the Iraqi war, are hard to predict. The budget needs room to breathe.”

The Houston Chronicle: “‘Charge it’; War costs going on credit cards of the next generation”
March 24, 2003

“This past week the U.S. House of Representatives approved a \$2.2 trillion budget for fiscal 2004. The measure preserves the \$726 billion in tax cuts the president wants over the next decade. It makes no provision for the cost of the war and the expensive rehabilitation of Iraq.

“Not counting war costs, which will go on the credit cards of Americans yet unborn, the fiscal arrangement proposed by Bush and approved by the Republican majority in the House would add more than \$1 trillion to the national deficit by 2013. The war and its aftermath will add uncountable billions more...

“The president and his supporters in Congress need to be candid concerning their budget decisions and the red ink they will spawn. In a time of war, courage is needed on the home front, as well. While the politicians might tremble at the thought of

transparency, they needn't doubt the willingness of American patriots to make the sacrifices demanded for the good of the nation."

UTAH

Salt Lake Tribune: "Bear the Burden" March 19, 2003

"Why, then, is the president so utterly unwilling to push more Americans, particularly the wealthiest Americans, to make even the smallest sacrifice to the cause he has devoted this nation to? Bush is sticking to a ridiculous tax-cut plan that will sap the government of precious resources, when we are already running an annual deficit of \$300 billion and carrying a total debt of \$6.4 trillion, figures that don't even include the billions that will be spent on this planned rescue of another nation.

"It makes no sense."

Deseret News (Salt Lake City, UT): "Now's not the time to cut taxes" January 8, 2003

"War is unpredictable...a long, protracted campaign that triggers counter-attacks by terrorists and Iraqi sympathizers could be hugely expensive. Coupled with giant tax cuts, it could send the budget deficit back into levels not seen in a decade or more, which would stifle growth and hamper investment.

"Congress ought to put the president's tax plan on the shelf for awhile until it knows better how the men and women in uniform are going to be spending their year."

VIRGINIA

Roanoke Times & World News: "Cap Bush's gusher of budgetary red ink" March 27, 2003

"Traditional wisdom says that when a man finds himself stuck at the bottom of a hole, the first thing he should do is stop digging.

"The Bush administration, faced with a multitrillion-dollar hole in the federal budget over the next decade, has asked for a bigger shovel instead...

"Congress, take away the president's shovel. This hole is too deep already."

The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk, Va.): "Troops fight the war, their kids will pay for it" March 27, 2003

"President George W. Bush is attempting to simultaneously wage wars against Iraq

and taxes. As a result, the Iraqi war is being fought on the nation's credit card. Young soldiers and sailors will fight it, and their children will pay for it...

"It is unseemly for a nation to ask for so much sacrifice from its troops in Iraq while treating its civilians at home to indulgences that they cannot afford."

WASHINGTON

Seattle Post-Intelligencer: "This is no time for a tax cut" March 26, 2003

"This initial round of war spending will push the 2003 federal budget deficit to a record \$400 billion. So as Congress faces these huge wartime expenditures, it's time to recognize that the proposed tax cut is folly. The Senate began saying that yesterday by slashing Bush's \$760 billion tax cut in half.

"The nation faces tremendous expenditures for war, anti-terrorism and domestic security. Our men and women in uniform, and their families, are being asked to make perhaps the ultimate sacrifice. A foregone tax cut would seem the skimpiest of sacrifices for the rest of us to make."

WEST VIRGINIA

Charleston Gazette: "Deep debt \$400 billion deficit" March 28, 2003

"...the bizarre part is that Republican leaders in control of Congress still want to approve Bush's new \$726 billion tax giveaway, on top of the \$1.3 trillion write-off he previously awarded to affluent taxpayers. This is astounding.

"After the House passed the full \$726 billion, the Senate voted Tuesday to cut the giveaway in half. Maybe the final figure will be somewhere in between - but any new giveaway at all is a slap in the face to average Americans...

"Now, incredibly, with war costs soaring into the stratosphere, Washington's Republican establishment wants to give a second gigantic gift to the rich - and make up the loss by slashing programs that help average Americans. This is unbelievable. But with the GOP in total control of the capital, it probably will happen."

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: "Two Cheers for the Senate" March 26, 2003

"...[O]n Tuesday, in a surprise, the Senate voted 51-48 to cut the tax plan by more than half - to \$350 billion. It's a start.

"The reasons not to proceed with this ill-timed, unbalanced tax cut are too numerous

to list here, but they include huge budget deficits as far out as the eye can see, a multitrillion-dollar addition to the national debt and the prospect of higher interest rates, suppressed business investment and additional pressure on the Social Security and Medicare systems...

“Yes, it's important to restrain the growth in discretionary federal spending. But the looming deficit crisis cannot be managed on the spending side alone. The president's tax package should be sharply reduced to those few elements - an accelerated and expanded child-care credit, for instance - that give the economy a bit of juice. The rest should be put on hold at least until the nation gets a better handle on deficits, and on the cost of war and its aftermath.”